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RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS 0384
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ABUJA 002363

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/W, INR/AA, DRL - KAREN GILBRIDE, DS/IP/AF/,
DS/TIA/ITA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/03/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KIRF](#) [ASEC](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: UNEASY CALM REMAINED IN JOS

REF: A. ABUJA 2358

[1](#)B. ABUJA 2345

[1](#)C. ABUJA 2328

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter Pflaumer for reasons 1.4. (b
& d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: An "uneasy calm" remained in the Plateau State capital of Jos on December 3, according to Mission contacts and Locally Engaged Staff (LES) family members. Missionary contacts reported occasional gunfire but no widespread violence. The military retained control and continued to enforce the curfew, although contacts reported the ability to move about more freely than in previous days. Nigerian military sources said troops would likely remain in Jos until after the Muslim Eid al-Adha holiday on December 8-9. Both Nigerian military sources and Mission contacts expressed concern over the possibility of additional violence surrounding the Muslim holiday. The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) reported there were close to 24,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in camps around the city, for whom the Agency was attempting to provide relief. LES staff confirmed media reports that neighboring state governments, including Benue and Kwara, made attempts to send vehicles to Jos to evacuate their indigenes back to their home states. Some LES contemplated going to Jos themselves, but expressed concerns about safety on the roads leading into and out of the city. According to LES, with all the security focused within the city, it created a void in the outskirts and rural areas where additional violence could occur. END SUMMARY

[1](#)2. (C) An "uneasy calm" remained in the Plateau State capital of Jos on December 3, according to Mission contacts and Locally Engaged Staff (LES) family members. Missionary contacts reported occasional gunfire but no widespread violence. Although the military retained control of the city, contacts reported that people were able to move about more freely and a few shops began to reopen. Human Rights Watch (HRW) researcher Eric Gutchuss (strictly protect) arrived in Jos on December 2 and reported heavy road blocks leading into Jos, causing him to question claims that large numbers of non-residents were able to enter the city. Gutchuss confirmed continued enforcement of the 6pm to dawn curfew in the city, in addition to the 24-hour curfew in certain areas. Nigerian military sources said troops would

likely remain in Jos until after the Muslim Eid al-Adha holiday on December 8-9. Both Nigerian military sources and Mission contacts expressed concern over the possibility of additional violence surrounding the Muslim holiday. Christian contacts of the Mission allege they continue to receive threatening text messages promising retribution. Despite earlier reports, LES family members reported that schools would remain closed until January due to concerns of violence surrounding the upcoming Muslim Eid and Christian Christmas holidays.

13. (C) The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) estimated there were close to 24,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) requiring assistance in camps around Jos. Contacts within the camps confirmed that food provided by NEMA started to "trickle" in on December 2. There was concern at the camps, however, that the military wanted to take control of aid distribution as there were reports in the past of soldiers allegedly taking the food for themselves or discriminating in food distribution. LES staff confirmed media reports that neighboring state governments made attempts to send vehicles to Jos to evacuate their indigenes back to their home states. Some LES contemplated travel to Jos themselves, but expressed concerns about the roads leading in and out of the city. According to LES, with all the security focused within the city, it created a void in the outskirts and rural areas where additional violence could occur.

14. (C) A Western military source supported reports that the Nigeria Police Force could be responsible for a number of the

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deaths that occurred during the initial stages of violence (ref C). The source stated that many of the corpses he examined at a mosque showed evidence of bullet wounds rather than machete marks, suggesting security forces rather than angry rioters were the perpetrators. Media reports also include statements from witnesses that "men in uniform" opened fired and indiscriminately killed local residents. HRW suggested the actions by security forces and Governor Jonah Jang's "shoot-on-sight" directive violated basic UN principles.

15. (C) Embassy ConsOff traveled through Jos at approximately noon on November 28 and witnessed mob violence that appeared targeted toward Muslims. A woman on the side of the road singled out the red vehicle directly in front of ConsOff in a police escorted convoy. The woman pointed at the car, yelling for others to come. ConsOff reported that a large crowd of young men carrying weapons such as knives, bows and arrows, chains, and farming tools, began immediately surrounded the cars and began attacking the red car in front of them. ConsOff did not observe anyone in the crowd with a gun. The windows, including the windshield, were smashed in and one young man attempted to pull the door off with a hoe, according to ConsOff. The passengers of the red car appeared to ConsOff to be Muslim (based on the headscarves worn by women passengers), but this could not be confirmed. Soon after the crowd attacked the red car, ConsOff witnessed soldiers coming through the crowd shooting their Ak-47-type weapons apparently indiscriminately. Although not aimed at anyone specifically, ConsOff said that the guns were aimed at crowd level rather than in the air. The crowd eventually allowed passage of ConsOff's POV. After departure from Jos, ConsOff traveled on to Bauchi State. ConsOff noted there was a military road block at the border that did not allow anyone to pass into Bauchi initially. After a short wait, the soldiers departed and allowed the entire convoy into Bauchi State. ConsOff remained in Yankari, Bauchi State until November 30 and did not witness any signs of violence spilling over. ConsOff returned to Abuja on November 30 via a route that circumvented Jos and, again, did not see any signs of violence spreading to the rural areas outside the city.

¶16. (U) Plateau State Commissioner of Information Nuhu Gagara released a statement that 16 "mercenaries" from neighboring Republic of Niger were arrested for involvement in the violence. Nigerien Ambassador to Nigeria Isa Ibrahim rejected the accusation and was quoted in the press stating that those arrested had been living in Jos "for several years as water vendors." Ambassador Ibrahim added that 50 Nigerien nationals died as a result of the violence.

¶17. (C) COMMENT: Although we believe it likely that attempts to manipulate the LGA election on November 27 initially incited the violence, it is difficult to determine who threw the first punch, so to speak. It is possible local ANPP members decided they would not tolerate election rigging and tried to protect the ballot boxes. It is also possible that the PDP-controlled state government deployed either party thugs or the police to secure the vote and "deal with" agitated area voters. Based on reports, it is likely gunfire from the security forces (we have heard of no/no reports of anyone other than security forces with firearms in the area) caused many of the fatalities, thus adding fuel to the fire. The comments by the Nigerien Ambassador to Nigeria were well-reported and we hope they will diffuse some of the anger created over claims of outside agitators initiating the violence. Although calm remained for a third day, we remain cautious and alert to the possibility of another outbreak around the Eid.

¶18. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED. In addition to concerns among our LES over family members in the Jos area, we are aware of at least one heated argument between two of our LES (one Christian and one Muslim) over the Jos violence. One of those involved then refused to speak to a third employee of the other faith. The tensions between the Muslim and

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Christian communities across much of northern Nigeria are real and have only been brought closer to the surface by the events in Jos. END COMMENT.
Sanders